

DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER

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SIXPENCE

Britain's Film Rôle in America

Based on material supplied by several correspondents in the United States.

MOST British visitors to the U.S.A. today find there a surprising enthusiasm for British films. This enthusiasm is in many ways misleading, and tends to obscure the real facts about the distribution and reception of British films in the U.S. during the past 3½ years.

True, the intelligent movie-goer raves over *Target for Tonight*; Hollywood technicians point to the influence of British documentaries on feature production; Washington executives praise British methods of giving information or raising morale by means of film.

But a colder appraisal, in terms of audience coverage, if not of audience reaction, would tell a different story. The distribution record is not so rosy. The American success of *Target for Tonight* and *49th Parallel* (known there as *The Invaders*) is now well known. The former still illustrates the daily news bulletins; the latter had in any case enough star names to sell it. Of shorts, *London Can Take It* made screen history—and illustrated real history. The film, including Quentin Reynolds, was easily understood by the New World citizenry.

Moderately successful were *Christmas Under Fire*, *Heart of Britain*, *Men of the Lightship*, *Squadron 992* and *Letter from Home*. Recently the Office of War Information has accepted *21 Miles* and *Night Shift* for re-editing and subsequent release to the 11,000 theatres which have agreed to run O.W.I. official shorts. And arrangements have been concluded with major distributors for the release of *Next of Kin*, *Coastal Command* (re-edited), *Merchant Seamen* (re-edited) and *We Sail at Midnight*. *Listen to Britain* has been refused by all theatrical distributors, but is to obtain 16 mm. distribution through O.W.I.

This theatrical distribution may seem somewhat meagre when it is considered that some 250 films have actually been made available and that from the propaganda point of view circulation in the theatres (however excellent the non-theatrical set-up may be) is of vital importance in the U.S.A.

There have been, and still are, a number of adverse factors which have to be faced in selling British official shorts for U.S. circulation. For instance, the shorts market is almost permanently at saturation point; it is exceedingly difficult to judge from time to time what is the most saleable length—one or two reels; there has been, and still is, sales resistance to British product based very often not on previous experience but on prejudice or on anti-British feeling.

With these and other factors to contend with, anyone trying to get a contract with a major U.S. distributor for British shorts needs to have on hand product which is not merely box-office *qua* subject matter but also meets American needs as regards treatment, accent and tempo.

The trouble at the British end is twofold. Firstly, there is the old lack of policy, or guidance on policy, which has made so much of the M.O.I.'s work ineffective. Secondly, there are the faults of the Films Division itself. From the point of view of U.S. distribution, the Films Division tends to send out films which have not been made with a real understanding of what is wanted by the U.S. market. Policy, if any, tries to suit current events and occasions. The time-lag of production, accentuated as it always is by delays (many of them avoidable), tends to make the finished film out of date.

In addition to this, our method of presentation is usually wrong. Much of our vernacular is unintelligible to U.S. audiences; some of our accents sound sissy and irritating to them. Our tempo is too slow for what they believe to be their hustling way of life. As a result our films lack speed, punch, attack and news value—all of which are marketable commodities in the U.S.A.

It has been said—by persons who should know better—that the Americans must learn to like our stuff, that we must stick to our own style, because it is so especially British. The answer is that in the stress of war we cannot, like the solitary donkey, let our message soak slowly through the sales resistance it undoubtedly meets. We must be British all right, but in terms immediately acceptable to the market.

One sometimes wonders whether the members of the Films Division ever take any notice of, or even read, the reports on the American problem which they must receive regularly, not merely from their U.S. representatives but also from others in a position to know. The *laissez faire*, negative, nineteen-twentyish, and almost feminine mystique of the Division suggests that they do not.

It would appear that there are certain policy lines which would help to solve our film propaganda problems in the U.S. We should, for instance, realise much more vividly the usefulness of immediate front-line news. The M.O.I. might well try for a much closer collaboration with Service and Newsreel units, in order to get a constant flow of spot news material across to the U.S. in the minimum time.

(continued on page 184)

THESE ARE THE MEN *by Dylan Thomas*

This is the commentary of "These Are The Men", a Strand film, largely compiled from the German "Triumph Des Willens"—'a record of the 1934 Reich Party Congress (at Nuremberg) produced by order of the Führer, created by Leni Riefenstahl.' "These Are The Men" has been produced for the M.O.I. for theatrical distribution and the commentary, reprinted here with official permission, is Crown Copyright.

THE mood of the opening sequence of the film is quiet and slow. From a height we look down on to men baking bread, men going about their work quietly and efficiently, men of no particular nationality, just working men. We see them in the bakery, in the fields at harvest time, on the dock side, on a trawler, in an iron foundry.)

"Who are we? We are the makers the workers the bakers
Making and baking bread all over the earth in every town and village,

In country quiet, in the ruins and the wounds of a bombed street
With the wounded crying outside for the mercy of death in the city,
Through war and pestilence and earthquake
Baking the bread to feed the hunger of history.

"We are the makers, the workers, the farmers, the sailors,
The tailors, the carpenters, the colliers, the fishermen,
We dig the soil and the rock, we plough the land and the sea,
So that all men may eat and be warm under the common sun."

(Now we see behind the workers, behind the work they are doing, the shadow of war. The men are still doing their jobs, jobs that are done all over the world, pottery, carpentry, sleeper-laying, steel-making. This is their peace-time work, but we see too what they or their brothers all over the world are doing now—fighting on every front.)

"We are the makers, the workers, the wounded, the dying, the dead,
The blind, the frostbitten, the burned, the legless, the mad
Sons of the earth who are fighting and hating and killing now
In snow and sand and heat and mud;
In the streets of never-lost Stalingrad,
In the spine-freezing cold of the Caucasus,
In the jungles of Papua,
In the tank-churned black slime of Tunisia.

"We are the makers, the workers, the starving, the slaves
In Greece and China and Poland, digging our own graves.

"Who sent us to kill, to be killed, to lose what we love?
Widowed our women, unfathered our sons, broke the hearts of our homes?
Who dragged us out, out of our beds and houses and workshops
Into a battle-yard of spilt blood and split bones?"

(We are back in the bakery again—the camera tracks forward as one of the bakers opens the fire door—the camera still moves forward until the flames of the fire fill the screen.)

"Who set us at the throats of our comrades?
Who is to blame?
What men set man against man?
Shout, shout, shout out their name!"

(The flames dissolve into hands raised in the Nazi salute—the sound dissolves into the frenzied "siege heil" of masses of men and women who crane their necks and push their fellows.

From a great height we look down on to the mighty crowd in the Nuremberg Festival. The people stand motionless now, in two vast phalanxes, their hands raised in the Nazi salute. Between the massed robot crowds, four tiny figures walk towards the rostrum at the end of the stadium. They are Hitler, Hess, Göring, Goebbels.)

The voice says, "These are the men—these are to blame."

Hitler begins to speak, to shout in German. Over the German an English voice, a would-be translator, says:

"I was born of poor parents.
I grew into a discontented and neurotic child.
My lungs were bad, my mother spoilt me and secured my exemption from military service. Consider my triumphant path to power:
(The crowd roars.)

I took up art.
I gave up art because I was incompetent.
I became a bricklayer's labourer,
A housepainter,
A paperhanger,
A peddler of pictures,
A lance-corporal,
A spy on socialists and communists,
A hater of Jews and Trade Unions,
A political prisoner.
But my worth was known.
Patriotic industrial magnates financed me.
Röhm and others supported me.
Later I betrayed and murdered Röhm and the others.
They had fulfilled their purpose. (The crowd roars.)
I am a normal man.
I do not like meat, drink, or women.
Heil,
Heil.
Neurosis, charlatanism, bombast, anti-socialism,
Hate of the Jews, treachery, murder, race-insanity.
I am the Leader of the German People."
(The crowd stamp and cheer with joy.)

Goebbels speaks:

"My father was the son of a peasant, my mother a blacksmith's daughter.

But I was cleverer.

After Heidelberg University, I became a writer of plays, a poet, a journalist. None of my work was accepted. And this was because the editors and publishers were Jews.

Unemployed, Jew-hating, crippled, frustrated and bitter, I joined the Nazi Party.

Streicher and I founded a newspaper to propagate obscene lies against Jews and Socialists, and said that the Liberty of the Press was one of the greatest abuses of Democracy.

Consequently I was appointed Propaganda leader to the whole of Germany.

(The Crowd cheers.)

Göring speaks:

"I began well.

I was the son of a Colonial Governor.

I was rich.

I became an officer and the air-ace of Germany.

After the war I took to drugs

And twice was confined in a lunatic asylum as a drug-addict.

Then I joined the Nazi movement,

Helped to organise the Storm-troops, the Gestapo, and the Secret Police,

And established contact between

The Nazi Party and Mussolini's Fascists.

I am a normal man:
Twice married, twice mad.
Gangsterism, brute force, wealth for the few, cocaine and murder."
(The crowd roars.)

Streicher speaks:
"I am Streicher, a lover of birds and animals, a torturer and murderer of Jews."
(They cheer.)

Hess speaks:
"I was one of the first members of the Nazi Party: a reactionary, anti-Jewish, ex-officer, restless, discontented, a believer in Blood and Iron. As early as 1920 I knew that Hitler was the Saviour. Heil Hitler! Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil!
I became the Deputy Führer of Germany.
In 1941 I flew to England, hoping to arrange a dishonourable peace between Germany and the pro-German elements I imagined I would find in England.
Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil!
I was wrong. I am a prisoner.

(We then see the massed Gestapo marching, led by Himmler, and the crowd of youths who watch the ghastly parade.) The voice says:

"And these are the men, the young men, the callow boys
Who have been taught the knuckle-duster and the rubber hose.
You are young only once: you could have learned to love:
You have learned to maim the weak and to spit on the Jews.

You have been taught to betray your country and your people,
Your own flesh and blood, your comrades all over the earth;
Young men like you have hacked and blasted
The land and the homes of strangers who did you no harm,
Burned men and women alive
And left a slug-trail behind you of terror and death.

You obeyed your leader's word.
You must suffer his reward."

(From the marching Gestapo we go to German prisoners being marched in Africa and Russia.)

"And the betrayers are betrayed, and the promises of victory
Turn stale and sour under African sun and Russian snow."

(Dead Germans—Frozen corpses in the snow.)

"Where is your triumph now in the purgatories of Stalingrad?
How many of you will never return to the towns and villages you know?"

(We fade out on masses of crosses over the graves of German soldiers. Back in Germany—close shots of youths and young boys.)

"Some of the young men, not utterly scarred and poisoned,
Who have grown into manhood out of a school of horror,
May yet be our comrades and brothers, workers and makers,
After the agony of the world at war is over."

(The leaders who have betrayed them, who have poisoned their minds, and who want to spread their filthy doctrine all over the world, stand together on a raised platform.)

"But for those who taught them the business of death,
Who crippled their hearts with cruelty, never, never, never
Shall there be pardon or pity: no hope of a new birth.
They shall be put down: Forever."

HITLER screams: "We are the men—Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil!"

NOTES OF THE MONTH

The Films Division

THERE ARE some indications that higher quarters have begun to realise that all is not well in the Films Division of the M.O.I. The Division has so far enjoyed a good reputation, chiefly because it has publicised the Ministry and has been able to show concrete results denied to other Divisions. The trouble with the Division is not in its individual personnel but in their relation to the whole. The individual, however effective in himself, becomes quickly vitiated by the careless, *laissez-faire* atmosphere of the Division.

However efficient the machinery may be, the quality of the product leaves much to be desired. It is for M.O.I. officials, as well as film makers, to remember that the machine will only turn out a good product if good raw materials are supplied in the first place.

A.C.T.

ONE WELCOME result of the war-time rationalisation of film production is the increasing power and influence of the Association of Cine-Technicians. The Association has recently concluded with the Association of Short Film producers, representing the employers, an agreement which regularises wages and working conditions. In some units, employees are meeting regularly to consider production problems and to advise the management. All this is good, and neither employer nor employee must be impatient if such developing relationships result in occasional growing pains. In those Short Film companies which specialise in documentary production these recent events do not represent a great change from the old methods of working. In most of the Documentary Units the distinction between employer and employee has always been vague. The principle has been that the demands of the job itself—the purpose and quality of the product—must take precedence over the personal interests of the film-maker, be he managing director or office-boy, and that what goes on the screen is more important than the luxuriousness or otherwise of the conditions under which it is made. Since A.C.T. believes that the production of propaganda and instructional films as a part of the war effort is a vital job to be done in defence of democracy, we have no doubt that the Association will continue to put the job first. The newly-won powers of A.C.T. can become a factor of great importance in stimulating a spirit of enthusiasm and in discouraging self-seeking amongst film-makers.

William Hunter

WE REPORT with regret the sudden death, after an operation, of William Hunter, director of the Dartington Hall Film Unit, while serving in the photographic section of the R.A.F. Hunter had instituted a number of experiments in educational films, of which the most noteworthy was one on the Galapagos islands. His place at Dartington will be hard to fill.

Canadian Good Sense

THE appointment of John Grierson as general manager of all Canadian propaganda services is a logical as well as a sensible step. Grierson's able and imaginative energies have long ranged outside the parochial confines of the film world—in which his sense of propaganda only served to emphasise the need for him sooner or later to enter wider fields. His new post is the Canadian equivalent of Director General of the M.O.I., and he is answerable only to his Minister. Many people here will envy the propagandists of Canada their new boss, and will, somewhat ruefully, attempt to calculate the magnitude of the loss which our own propaganda services may be found to have suffered through lack of a leader with a similar creative imagination and will to action. As it is, the vast mausoleum in Malet Street remains a monument to the continued neglect by the Government of the powerful weapon of propaganda.

THE FILM IN EDUCATION

This discussion of post-war needs in Education by R. S. Miles does not represent the views of D.N.L. However, as we are deeply interested in this important subject, we should be glad to invite correspondence from readers. Ed.

IN the hopeful schemes for the post-war structure of education it has been gratifying to note that the authorities are prepared to grant some measure of recognition to the film not only as an aid to teaching but also as an art. The British Film Institute has seized upon this attitude of mind and has, by its recently concluded campaign done a vast amount of preliminary propaganda among L.E.A.'s and teachers. For the time when conditions permit, the Institute has already prepared a scheme for the establishment of regional film libraries which should put films within the reach of all schools suitably equipped. Many schools should be quickly provided with projectors after the war, if the fact is recognised early enough that there are large numbers of projectors now in use with the forces which will become redundant in the peace. Schools should have the first chance of securing them. The primary need of the school cinema is obviously a sufficient number of projectors, and if steps are taken now to earmark those in use by the Services one very big problem will have been solved.

The complementary need is for a plentiful supply of adequate films—adequate in the sense of being suitable for as many schools as possible. Urban, rural, junior, and senior schools must be considered, as must secondary, technical and similar schools along with Adult Education classes. This is a tall order, but one which needs a root and branch consideration now. Personally I am convinced that the greatest handicap to the use of films in schools is not the scarcity or cost of projectors but the lack of suitable films to justify the expenditure upon film apparatus. This problem has been ventilated many times in your columns and my object in re-opening it is to urge the need for the immediate establishment of committees to review the whole business of films in education and to plan educational film production.

Reports on Films

In the first instance these will consist of practical teachers who will say what films they want, what points they would like emphasised and what merely sketched in. The reports emanating from this primary working committee would be collated by a Central Committee of which the British Film Institute should be the core.

This Central Committee would comprise representatives of film users (teachers), film makers (directors, etc.) and the British Film Institute. The necessity for such co-operation is emphasised every month by the Film Institute's Viewing Panels' reports on the "educational" films. A more damning denunciation of the quality of so-called educational films could not be imagined than many of the reports printed in the *Monthly Film Bulletin*. There is hardly one to reach the standard set by the various viewing panels. This then would seem to prove the assertion that the supply of films is the root of the whole question. Let this demand be met and the use of the whole film medium as an aid to educa-

tion will come into its own without much further ado.

The problems facing a Committee planning the supply of school films would include these: (1) to decide what subjects in the curriculum could be most usefully illustrated by means of films; (2) a "priority" list compiled from them for those subjects whose demands are most urgent or extensive; (3) a "titles" list in each subject, covering the aspects of that subject best lending themselves to filmic presentation; (4) the contents of each of these films and as a subsidiary question whether they are to be as sound and/or silent films; (5) the costs of each film, its length, the number of copies of each film to be printed; (6) the possibilities of making "master" films to act as a reservoir from which other ones could be made for varying ages and intelligences; (7) the producers of the various films; (8) the question of granting "suitability certificates" by the Committees after films have been seen by them; (9) the supply of films for teaching film appreciation; (10) the extent of the co-operation between buyers, i.e. teachers and L.E.A.'s and makers; the whole lot leading to the last one, the question of organised distribution through local film libraries.

This list of duties is a heavy one and perhaps not comprehensive, but it is sufficient to point the argument for the necessity of planning production.

It is obvious that every school subject has some possibilities for illustration by films. Even Mathematics, as Messrs. Dance and Kauffman have shown, can in part be so illustrated. Languages too can find films to be of great help but the value here is confined to modern languages where pictures of foreign life can be made more alive by the spoken language of that country. Apart perhaps from Roman and Greek History it would be difficult to envisage the film as an aid to the teaching of the classics. Most school subjects can, however, undoubtedly use films to their great value. Geography obviously, History also, "Science" in many of its branches. Mary Field has explored the field of biology. Petroleum Films Bureau have shown the way for films of chemistry, physics, and mechanics. The film has an excellent opportunity here to show the commercial application of laboratory experiments and formulae. Physical training, as has been done by a physical training instructress in Birmingham; nature study—some art perhaps, and more of the crafts are all further subjects in which the cinema can be used. For my own part I can see little if any use for the film in English teaching where so much depends upon individual inspiration and imagination.

Abstracted from this list of subjects would be a further one showing the precise possibilities that each had for films, indicated by those aspects of each subject the teaching of which would be definitely improved with the aid of films. Following from all this would be the important part of the whole scheme—a statement of titles of the films to serve this purpose. Great care would be needed here to prevent overlapping,

and the aspects listed under numbers (4) and (6) above would need to be incorporated in this consideration. It would perhaps be more economical and useful to make what I call "master" films covering as wide a sweep of the subject as possible and from these library films to construct others with specific age or intelligence groups in view. It seems as obvious and necessary as the different treatment required, for instance, in teaching juniors and University students about Alfred the Great. In the former case stress would be laid upon Alfred as a cook and a harpist. In the latter the significance of Alfred's statesmanship would form the theme for study. It is necessary and should be possible to treat subjects in a similar way filmically. Some ages are better taught by means of silent films and a teacher's own commentary. Some subjects may be better taught so to all ages but in many cases sound is not only desirable but an advantage. It is for the Committee to decide what versions shall be made.

Production Planning

When the subjects and contents of the films to be made have been decided, priorities for production must be assigned, annual production planned, the number of copies of each film decided and the firms to whom the making must be entrusted. This is very important because some firms have specialised in special types of films and consequently have accumulated special apparatus and experience with a staff who have gained specialist knowledge of their individual jobs. The production of diagrammatic films and biological films has been the speciality of G.B. Instructional under the genius of Mary Field, companies working for the British Commercial Gas Association have distinguished themselves by brilliant sociological and documentary films while the Shell Film Unit has made a name for the clear exposition of applied science. There are others but these will suffice to illustrate my point. To ask such firms to undertake mixed work would be both inefficient and uneconomic.

When the films have been made there should be a viewing panel of teachers to give the films the educational counterparts of "U" and "A" certificates, to criticise if necessary, and to prepare synopses and notes for potential users. For the better working of film production it would be advisable to have a standing committee of representatives of teachers, L.E.A.'s, the B.F.I. and film makers to deal with current matters of production and to act as a liaison branch between planning and production.

Finally the marketing of the finished product. Here again all interests must be represented and a vast amount must be devolved upon local committees, e.g. Teachers Associations. In this as in every one of these branches of the work the Film Institute has a paramount part to play. It should be the nerve centre of the whole system, and I would suggest that it is necessary immediately to set to work to plan film production after the war. The foregoing is an effort to indicate some of the problems to be solved and out of these I have omitted the supply and types of films required for the teaching of film appreciation. It is an urgent question of wide dimensions demanding an article to itself.

MINISTRY OF INFORMATION

United Kingdom Non-Theatrical Distribution 1941-1942

Report on Second Year's Work

THE TOTAL audience for the Ministry's Non-Theatrical film shows in the United Kingdom during the second year of working (September 1941 to August 1942) was 12 million. The weekly audience at the beginning of the third year of working is now 350,000. This audience is reached in the following three ways:—

(1) *Mobile Film Units*.—During the year 1941-42 the mobile film units gave 38,000 shows to an audience of six and three-quarter millions. There are now 130 units on the road, and they are giving 1,200 film shows a week. One hundred and twenty-four of the units are 16 mm. and thirty-seven of these are equipped with petrol generators to provide electricity where there is no mains supply. Six of them are 35 mm. units.

(2) *Shows in Public Cinemas*.—In the year 1941-42, 1,300 shows were given in cinemas out of ordinary cinema hours to a total audience of 900,000. Now fifty a week are being given, including a large number of training shows for Civil Defence and National Fire Service personnel.

(3) *Central Film Library, loan to borrowers*.—The Central Film Library with its sub-libraries in Scotland and the South West Civil Defence Region in 1941-42 made 48,000 bookings of Ministry of Information films to 3,500 separate organisations with their own projectors. The audience reached by the loan of films was four and a half million. The library is now booking 1,500 Ministry of Information films a week to these borrowers.

The Central Film Library, London, also incorporates the pre-war Libraries of films about the Overseas Empire and the United Kingdom, including the G.P.O. films. A further 40,000 bookings of these films were made in 1941-42, and 1,000 a week are now being made.

The Film Officers at the Ministry's Regional Offices are responsible for the shows given on the mobile units and in cinemas out of ordinary cinema hours. The facts and figures given in this report are a record of their work. They were set the target of ten shows a week on each unit in operation. 38,000 shows were given, which represents 92 per cent achievement of a possible maximum of 42,000 shows.

The number of mobile unit shows cancelled during the year 1941-42 because of break-downs in equipment or the vans, was less than half per cent of the shows given. It is the responsibility of the projectionists, in the first instance, to keep their projectors and vans in efficient condition. In each Region there is also an engineer who keeps all equipment under constant supervision, and arranges for repairs that can be carried out without an elaborate workshop. In London the Ministry has expanded its maintenance department to carry out major repairs for all the Regions, and to arrange for stocking and despatching spare parts and reserve equipment. The maintenance department also trains new driver-projectionists. Women projectionists are now being trained, and several are already in charge of mobile units. This maintenance department also looks after all cars and equipment used by the Ministry for public address purposes.

Audiences and Programmes

During the week ending November 7th, 1942, 1,224 shows were given to audiences as follows:

Factories and construction sites	408
General shows	230
Civil Defence, National Fire Service and Home Guards ..	226
For other Government Depts. (Agriculture, Food, Health, Labour, Fuel)	78
Women's organisations ..	114
Schools	84
Youth organisations	46
Services and U.S. Army ..	22
Miscellaneous	16
	1,224

(The Ministry does not, except in special circumstances, give film shows to Service Units, as all the Services have their own organisations and equipment for showing films. Shows are only given to Senior schools by special request.)

About one third of the shows given each week are in factories, the majority of which have a show once a month. Another third are shows to village audiences, women's organisations and groups in small country towns. The aim is to give village shows regularly every two months. Shows for other Government departments of a more specialised kind, including training film shows to Civil Defence and National Fire Service personnel represent roughly another third. A large number of these shows are given in cities and urban districts. They are not organised on the same regular monthly and two-monthly circuits as factory and village shows.

Shows in factories are usually given during the midday and midnight breaks, and cannot therefore contain more than two or three films, lasting in all about 25 minutes. For factory shows films are specially produced, and aim at relating the work done in factories to the achievements and problems of the fighting fronts. 35 mm. mobile units are now in use for the large factories so that as many as 3,000 workers can see the show at one time.

General shows in villages usually consist of five or six films, lasting in all about 80 minutes. The series of programmes are devised to give varied and coherent pictures of the war, both at home and on the fighting fronts and in terms of this country, the Overseas Empire and the United Nations. Specialised films made for other Government departments are also included in these general programmes where they are needed to direct attention to special local problems.

Instructional films for special audiences are made and distributed by the Ministry on behalf of other Government departments. During 1941-42 these films have included films for farmers on silage, ploughing, hedging, ditching, etc.; films for allotment holders and films about food; films on blood transfusion, diphtheria immunisation and accident prevention; training films for Civil Defence personnel, both part

time and full time. Specialised films of this kind are usually shown together with other more general Ministry of Information films to make up a programme of about 80 minutes in length. Some of the films made on behalf of other Government departments are of such wide application that they are included in every possible programme. In this way, for example, the film *Fire Guard* was shown to more than two million people in six months.

In 1941-42, 49 films were produced and issued by the Ministry for non-theatrical showing only. A further 81 films were also used, some widely and some on occasions only; of these, 34 were films produced by the Ministry for cinema and overseas distribution; 16 were produced by Dominions Governments and the Government of India; 15 were produced by the American, Soviet and Polish Governments; and 16 films were acquired from commercial film companies and industrial concerns.

There are 332 films listed in the Ministry of Information catalogue issued by the Central Film Library. This represents all the films produced since September 1940, which are now available. They are classified under the following heads:—

Agriculture; Air Forces; Aircraft Recognition; Armies; Civil Defence, Education and Youth; Food, Diet and Cooking; Gardening; Government and Citizenship; Health, Hygiene and Medicine; Labour, Industry and Munitions; Navies; Salvage; Strategy, Campaign and Tactics; Women in the Services; Women in Industry and Civil Life; British Commonwealth of Nations; U.S.A., U.S.S.R., Poland and other Allies.

DETAILED FIGURES SEPTEMBER 1941 TO AUGUST 1942

1. 16 mm. Mobile Units

In September 1941, there were 72 16-mm. units working. Additional units were put out as equipment came through and by August 1942, 107 16-mm. units were working. Figures for the year were as follows:—

	1941-42	1940-41	Percentage increase over 1940-41
Units working Operational	107	72	50%
weeks	4,218	2,599	62%
Shows given ..	37,940	20,668	83%
Total Audience	6,688,742	3,130,374	113%
Average audience	175	151	16%

These figures show that the increase in the number of shows given and total audience was much greater proportionately than the increase in the number of units and the number of operational weeks.

2. 35 mm. Mobile Units

The first two 35-mm. Mobile units were put out towards the end of the year. These units gave 112 shows to a total audience of 61,054 (average audience 545). Two 35-mm. daylight

(continued on page 178)

M.O.I. Report cont.

projection units were also used from time to time for series of shows in certain dockyards where 16-mm. units would not be efficient. The daylight vans can be stationed in the sheds where as many as 600 men may see the films during the midday break.

3. 35 mm. Shows in Cinemas

One thousand three hundred and two shows were given in public cinemas out of ordinary cinema hours to a total audience of 879,842 (average audience 677). This is three times the number of such shows given in 1940-41. About one-third of these shows were training shows arranged for Civil Defence personnel and Fire Guards, for the Ministry of Home Security; the shows were organised with the Civil Defence Controllers and cinemas were often loaned free. Many of the other shows were arranged to tie up with campaigns organised by Ministries of Labour, Health, Agriculture, Food.

4. Projectors on Loan

The scheme for lending projectors to public libraries, etc., which showed a programme of films every day in every other week was abandoned in December 1941, and all but three of the projectors were withdrawn and converted into mobile units. During three months 1,461 shows were given to a total audience of 151,767, an average audience of 104 at each show as against 82 for the previous year.

5. Total Non-Theatrical Audience 1941-42

The total audience reached by all the non-theatrical showings was more than 12 million made up as follows:—

16-mm. units	6,688,742
35-mm. units	61,054

35-mm. daylight units	80,871
Shows in cinemas	879,842
Loaned projectors	151,767
Central Film Library	4,500,000
	<hr/> 12,362,276

It must be stressed that this figure is the total audience, not a total number of individuals, since many audiences have several shows during the year. On the other hand it should be noted that every person in this total audience at each show has not seen a single film but a programme of films lasting 30 to 80 minutes.

6. Central Film Library

The Central Film Library, London (with the Scottish Central Film Library and the Film Library of the South-West) lent Ministry of Information films to 3,476 separate organisations and individuals with their own projectors. To these borrowers the Library made a total of 48,599 bookings as compared with 16,295 for 1940-41, an increase of 200 per cent. Of this total the Scottish Central Film Library made 3,498 bookings and the Film Library of the South West made 3,924 bookings. These bookings represent 147,680 showings of the films lent, since a large part of the films are booked for showing on several consecutive days to different audiences before being returned. Borrowers borrow one to five or six films for showing at a time. If an average programme is taken as being three films it may be said that 147,680 showings represent 45,000 showings of a three-film programme. The average audience at these showings is 100. The total audience for Ministry of Information films reached by the loan of films from the Library was four and a half million...

The Central Film Library incorporates the pre-war Empire and G.P.O. Film Libraries which lend out educational films about the Overseas Empire and the United Kingdom. The bookings of all films from the Central Film Library (but excluding the sub-libraries) were as follows:

	1941-42	1940-41
Ministry of Information	41,177	15,525
G.P.O.	6,393	4,705
Empire	34,048	26,856
	<hr/> 81,618	<hr/> 47,086

The Central Film Library also supplies and services films issued to the Ministry of Information Regional Officers for use on the mobile units and at shows in public cinemas. Including these despatches the Library made 88,273 despatches during 1941-42 as against 52,986 in the previous year.

The four catalogues issued by the Central Film Library list 750 films as follows:—

Ministry of Information: sound films (films produced September 1940– November 1942)	332
Ministry of Information: Silent Films	25
Overseas Empire (films made before 1940)	245
United Kingdom (films made before 1940, excluding G.P.O. films) ..	147
	<hr/> 749

(Films shown on the Ministry's mobile units and in public cinema shows arranged by the Ministry are drawn only from the Ministry of Information catalogue).

7. The total number of borrowers of Ministry of Information and Empire films from the Central Film Library, and of borrowers of Ministry of Information films only from two sub-libraries was 4,509. The 3,476 borrowers of Ministry of Information films have been divided into categories as follows:—

	16 mm. sound	16 mm. silent	35 mm. sound	TOTAL
Adult organisations ..	368	95	76	539
Local Authorities ..	351	56	73	480
Factories & Business houses	212	41	20	273
Churches	173	45	1	219
Youth Organisations	294	65	28	387
Allotment Societies, etc.	83	12	5	100
Hospitals	36	6	18	60
Prisons	23	1	2	26
Women's Institutes & other women's org- anisations	39	17	6	62
Individuals showing to all kinds of orga- nisations	91	18	7	116
Army Units	222	13	45	280
Home Guard Units ..	50	12	9	71
R.A.F. Stations ..	122	6	25	153
Royal Observer Corps	21	2	7	30
Naval Units	12	3	9	24
Schools (Secondary & public)	258	73	19	350
Schools (senior and elementary) ..	179	125	2	306
	<hr/> 2,534	<hr/> 590	<hr/> 352	<hr/> 3,476

★ For your information

IN every progressive enterprise there must be leaders and those who follow behind. As artistic and technical progress in cinematography quickens to the tempo and stimulus of war, "KINEMATOGRAPH WEEKLY" is always to be found "up-with-the-leaders", its well-informed pages radiating perception and far-sighted thinking. Kinematography's leaders themselves know this for truth and turn to "K.W." week by week for information and enlightenment.

**KINEMATOGRAPH
WEEKLY**



93 LONG ACRE
LONDON W.C.2

FILM OF THE MONTH—"NINE MEN"

Nine Men. Production: Ealing Studios and Michael Balcon. Direction: Harry Watt. Length: 6,100 ft.

One of the best remarks about *Nine Men* was made by C. A. Lejeune and it was a great compliment both to Harry Watt and John Grierson. She said "*Harry Watt was trained by John Grierson and when Grierson trains anyone they stay trained*". It is a compliment to Watt because *Nine Men* is the purest of the pure imaginative documentaries. It is a compliment to Grierson because about twenty years ago he conceived the idea and found the basis for working it out not only for himself, but for a lot of other people as well. Compliments are, of course, also due to Michael Balcon, and to Cavalcanti in particular.

Watt started in the film business nearly ten years ago. Before that he had been an assistant in the stock room in a threepenny and sixpenny store. Before that he had done a voyage to Newfoundland on a sailing ship and, as neither the mate nor the captain had the slightest idea of navigation, he had a good idea what Government film sponsorship was like long before he had anything to do with it. Before the sailing ship he had a rubber ball factory. His father had left him some money and Watt thought that the best thing he could do would be to invest it in some commercial affair, make some money quickly and then stand for Parliament, preferably for a country constituency. All went well—he found an inventor, and with Watt supplying the money and his chum the brains, they started to make large rubber balls out of old motorcar tyres. Finally came the day when they had a factory full of balls and no more money. So putting down all the money that had been spent on one side, and the number of rubber balls they had made on the other, they divided the money by the balls and arrived at a figure to sell the balls at. Simple but primitive. The answer was about ten bob each. As similar balls were already selling for sixpence, Watt decided it might be better to try the hard way of making money and that's how he came to be on a sailing ship some weeks later.

Film Career

But to get back to films. Watt joined the E.M.B. in 1932. After a year and a half as an assistant he made *Radio Interference* which was a simple and successful instructional. Then *Droitwich*, 6.30 Collection, *Night Mail*, *The Saving of Bill Blewett*, a number of English items for March of Time—and after that *North Sea*. He produced some of the G.P.O. films; worked on *The First Days*, directed *Squadron 992*, *London Can Take It*, *Christmas Under Fire*, and his last Ministry film, *Target for Tonight*. After a brief interlude with the War Office he moved on to Ealing and at Ealing made a film that he could never have made for a government department.

Nine Men is an honest film—and that's a thing you can say about very few. Perhaps it is this honesty which has made some of the critics a bit worried about it. *Nine Men* doesn't have any truck with story formulae or love interest, and its characters not only behave like human beings, but behave also with that casualness and natural *savoir-faire* which in any film actor is conspicuous only by its absence.

If you doubt the honesty of *Nine Men*, you can

easily find it confirmed by the two points where it is not honest. Firstly, in Watt's failure to avoid the cliché of returning to his opening sequence in order to frame the "flash-back" which is the bulk of the film; this merely makes the end of the story redundant, and one feels it in the direction. Secondly, there is one brief shot in the middle of the film when the wounded man—delirious—sees another's head framed in his steel helmet like a halo and shouts "Are there Saints in Hell?" or words to that effect. Maybe that has actually happened in real life—there may be lots of evidence for it—but the fact remains that it bursts into the truthful atmosphere of the film like a road house in paradise and gives the impression of having been popped in by some little Pinewood highbrow or other.

Other people have described the film as naïve

—a word often used by those who find that things true to life are not palatable. It is naïve if naïveté includes entire absence of concession to the alleged charms of the box office, resulting in a box office pull caused by the public recognising itself and its friends and relations taking part in the war with an active and understanding courage.

Nine Men only tells one story and says only one thing. This it does with modesty as well as skill. Twenty films of a similar scale and with a similarly sensible approach—and dealing with subjects less immediately spectacular—would put the M.O.I. out of business in a few weeks. But there, the Studios haven't any more sense than the M.O.I., and not many more Watts or potential Watts, so things will no doubt go on the same way.

Casting "Nine Men"

by Harry Watt

LOTS of people have been asking me about the casting of the nine principals in *Nine Men*. This is very complimentary because it means that people have found them real and have wondered where such types of actors or whatever you like to call them are to be found for British films. I should say that there are plenty around, but you've got to look hard for them and know what you want.

One great advantage in casting a film like *Nine Men* is to have worked very closely on the script and dialogue. During all of this you are creating the characters and the personalities, and by the time you have finished you have a perfect mind picture of exactly what your character is like. You then go ahead and find the nearest human approximation to your imaginary figure. If you can get one that fits almost exactly, then you've won half the battle of getting the character on the screen. Your mind-man has walked, talked and reacted to situations while you've been creating him. Just get your real character to behave in almost the same way and you've got your script coming to life.

With regard to *Nine Men*. From the beginning there was no intention of using non-actors. It was never an official film. Although the War Office approved the script, the film was a Michael Balcon, Ealing Studios venture. We could not therefore expect any more facilities than those granted in the ordinary way to a commercial undertaking. Releases from the Army to act are only granted to men who were actors in Civvy Street. So if we wanted Army men, they had to be actors. In general, I didn't go for actors, so outside the Army we looked for people to fit the characters, with or without acting experience.

The sergeant was the central figure. We decided to go after him first. We tested a couple of actors who have played many "tough guy" parts in British films. But to me they were disastrous. They turned the sergeant into a kind of Gestapo man with a phoney cockney accent. The sergeant, by the way, was originally written as a cockney. We then tried a physical training instructor who

had been a music-hall turn. But he showed up the limitations of the amateur. We tried a sergeant-major newly back from Libya. He not only couldn't act, but he told us all the time how rotten our script was! We tried two more actors. One was too R.A.D.A. for words, and the other looked as though he'd expect his uniform to be made by Norman Hartnell. We decided to leave the sergeant for a bit and try the other characters. The second most important character was Jock Scott, an ex-Glasgow policeman. And here I was on happier ground. Eleven years ago I saw a magnificent performance of Barrie's "The Old Lady Shows her Medals," by the Ardrossan and Saltcoats Players. All the time I'd been writing of Jock Scott I'd been thinking of Private Dowie. So obviously the man who created that character so vividly for me was the man to find. By incredible roundabout routes too long to describe, we found him as a Major in the Royal Scots Fusiliers, ensconced in a tent in the Grampians! He was Jack Lambert. After his amateur success he became a professional actor and made quite a career on the stage. But for some crazy reason film people hardly used him. I believe it was because of his Scots accent! He'd got more virility, dignity and appearance than ten of the average British film men, but he didn't try to kid the public by his accent that he'd been to Oxford. So he couldn't be used!

Anyway, to get back to casting. We asked Lambert to come down for a test for the Jock Scott character.

He grabbed 48 hours and came down. He was so perfect as Jock Scott that we immediately tested him as the sergeant. With a couple of chairs and a hat-stand as background he immediately created the atmosphere of our army hut. Our first big headache was over. We'd found the sergeant. It only meant transposing the dialogue a bit to Scots. The rest of the parts remained. Jock Scott came first. I remembered a big tough Edinburgh man who played the preacher in *The Edge of the World*. I'd seen a glimpse of him in Michael Powell films since. So we started our Sherlock Holmes act again and found him as a captain instructor at a battle

(continued on page 180)

Casting "Nine Men" cont.

school in Sussex. When he turned up for testing we found to our delight that the Army had made him even tougher and bigger than he'd been before. Stripped to the waist, he looked terrific. So we played him that way throughout the film. It's a good thing he was tough or he'd have died of cold on our "desert" location!

The other parts were easier to fill. An ex-sergeant of the Durham Light Infantry came along to see me one day with his escape story from Germany. The idea was that it might make a film. We didn't use his story, but we cast him as the lorry driver. His Army experience was invaluable because he took the non-army members of the cast in an hour's arms drill every day to make them soldierly. He'd never acted before and never will again, because he's now joined our production side as an assistant director.

Gordon Jackson, who had been lucky enough to have his first film part under Cavalcanti and Charles Frend, in *The Foreman Went to France*, was an obvious choice for the young soldier. His character as written was tougher than the way it was played. He was originally planned as a corner-boy type, but I soon found that it was Jackson's puppy-like quality on the screen that was his biggest appeal, so let him play it as himself. The old sweat was just as obviously Bill Blewett, that postmaster of Mousehole who is one of Britain's greatest character actors. Why he has never been exploited more I cannot imagine. Accent again perhaps. But I remember Cavalcanti saying after we had finished Bill's first film, *The Saving of Bill Blewett*. "If we had the influence and the money we could make that man the English Wallace Beery." And that was

eight years ago. Since then Bill has stolen about four documentary films and then gone on post-mastering.

The cockney part of Banger Hill was the only other one that caused any trouble. I tested an amateur from the N.F.S. but by this time was beginning to realise that, for a feature, technical acting skill was an asset and a help. So we got Fred Piper, another of the many really excellent small part actors who have never had a real break. The ease with which he played his part was a revelation, and an immense help to the less experienced members of the cast. The middle-class boy was Cav's idea. I have such an antipathy to the so-called conventional good-class accent as used almost exclusively on the West End stage, that I ignored the fact that the middle-class are fighting this war as well. It was a bad mistake, and the inclusion of Eric Micklewood as "The Booky" gave the film greater width and appeal.

Successful Experiment

Summing up, the casting of *Nine Men* was, for me, an experiment, which consensus of opinion seems to think came off. To carry parts in a story film of an hour or more needs experience. Either that, or the immense natural acting abilities of a Bill Blewett, which are so rare that it can be discounted. Professional actors are therefore necessary. The job is to find those that are human beings and have not lost contact with life because of the necessarily artificial life they lead. That such actors do exist is proved by the existence of Jack Lambert and Fred Piper. But in British films, in direct opposition to French films, they have been largely ignored. It is here that, I think, we can begin establishing a real British film movement. Let us ignore our established British stage stars and create new film ones. Actors and actresses that are real people and that can create real people. Actors and actresses that speak decent basic English and are not ashamed of the county of their origin. Actors and actresses to project to the world true portrayals of life in Britain. If the documentary movement is going to influence the British film industry permanently, it must have documentary actors. The glamour of seeing the real people doing the real job has become outworn. This problem was solved in French films, so there's no reason why it shouldn't be done here.

The Ego of the Actor

It's not easy, of course. Acting is a pernicious profession. Aldous Huxley sums it up in "Ends and Means" when he says . . . "Acting is one of the most dangerous of trades. It is the rarest thing to find a player who has not had his character affected for the worse by the practice of his profession. Nobody can make a habit of self-exhibition, nobody can exploit his personality for the sake of exercising a kind of hypnotic power over others, and remain untouched by the process. . . . Acting makes the ego in a way which few other professions do. For the sake of enjoying regular emotional self-abuse, our societies condemn a considerable number of men and women to a perpetual inability to achieve non-attachment. It seems a high price to pay for our amusements."

The solution for this is not to allow our actors to segregate themselves. They must be made to mix with the people. They must be sent to live amongst miners if the film is about mines. They must know how to handle and fire a rifle if they are soldiers. Their performances must come out of life and not be superimposed upon it.

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SIGHT and SOUND

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NEW DOCUMENTARY FILMS

Common Cause. Production: Verity Films Ltd. Producers: Max Munden and Derek de Marney. Director: Henry Cass. Camera: Eric Cross. Editor: Peter Tanner. 8 minutes. M.O.I. Non-T.

Subject: The not-so-obvious links between citizens of the United Nations.

Treatment: This film brings together in fortuitous pairs the men of different races who are fighting fascism on widely dispersed fronts. In China an airman of the Republic talks with an American transport flyer; in a North Russian port the pilot talks with the skipper of the British cargo-boat he has just brought safely into harbour. The script is ingenious and the acting adequate. The protagonists find that in spite of the superficial differences in day to day habit, they share fundamental decencies, the defence of which has brought them together.

Propaganda Value: This is a worth-while film. A difficult subject has been tackled bravely and if it has not completely come off the reason appears to lie in the occasionally naïve (or timid) avoidance of the real differences between Russians, Americans, Englishmen and Chinese. These we surely ignore at our ultimate peril, however convenient it may be to do so at the moment.

Inside Fighting Russia. National Film Board of Canada. Running Time: 20 minutes.

Subject: A résumé of recent Russian history ranging from Czarist times up to the present, showing how in this country a new spirit has grown up which can be found nowhere else in the world. The film seeks to demonstrate why this has happened. *Inside Fighting Russia* belongs to the first batch of releases in Britain of the *Front of Action* series which is produced by the National Film Board of Canada and has been in distribution for many months in Canada and the United States.

Treatment: The style employed borrows generously from the *March of Time* but the effect achieved is infinitely more powerful than *March of Time* has managed in recent years. There is the short vigorous cutting and the ominously authoritative transatlantic voice with which we have long been familiar, but the voice has something to say which few other films from the democracies are daring to put into words and the visuals have a cutting edge which *March of Time* lost long ago.

Few of the shots are new but they are skilfully arranged to reveal just why Hitler (and many democrats too) were so fantastically wrong in their guesses about Soviet military power. We first see Russia from the outside—from the point of view of the foreign military or lay observer, and we see how this edifice of political theory (as it seemed to many people) does not collapse at the first puff from the big bad wolf. Then—to explain the mystery—we go inside and see what Russia has been doing for these last twenty years, not primarily in the military field, but in the field of developing human dignity. From this point we are carried on to the inevitable conclusion that Russia's military strength is a by-product of her progress in her social services, her culture, her economics and

her communal *joie de vivre*. "Russia is strong" says the commentator finally, "because Russia has a faith."

Propaganda Value: This is the kind of film needed not in occasional single releases but in a flood. Such films not only will enable "people to speak unto people", but will point the way to the development of the only sure war-winning weapon—a developing philosophy which is strong enough to face the post-war future.

Save Your Own Seeds. Realist Film Unit. Direction: Margaret Thompson. Camera: A. E. Jeakins. Commentator: Roy Hay. A M.O.I. film for gardeners, 17 mins. Non-T.

Subject: Make this year's vegetable plot give you the seeds for next year's sowing.

Treatment: In the hurly-burly of film production the purely instructional type of film is often overlooked. It is possible, though, that it is the most important work being done in the short film field at the moment. *Save Your Own Seeds* is a straightforward account of how the ordinary gardener can provide seeds for the following year. It's easy and it's sensible. Miss Thompson has a masterly touch. Every point is made clearly and concisely and is so well put across that it will stick in the mind. And this is done by purely cinematic means. Jeakins' camera work illuminates the processes.

Instructional Value: Excellent. This is a model instructional film.

Clean Milk. Realist Film Unit. Direction: Margaret Thompson. Camera: A. E. Jeakins. Commentator: Roy Hay. A M.O.I. film for farmers. 15 mins. Non-T.

Subject: Encouraging farmers to provide clean milk for the good of the nation, as well as for their own profit.

Treatment: To the non-farmer this film can only be rather a dull screen excursion into the cow-byre. The film is made with the lucidity and technical mastery which characterises Miss Thompson's work but, when all is shown, it is mainly a matter of cleaning—udders, buckets, suction cups, tubes, and all the other paraphernalia of milking.

Instructional Value: That depends on the farmers. Incidentally, the film is enough to put you off milk for a long time.

Invincible? Production: U.S. Army Signal Corps with the M.O.I. and British Movietone News. M.O.I. 15 mins.

Subject: A captured enemy newsreel, issued by the Germans in French, for circulation in North Africa, turned into a propaganda film for Britain.

Treatment: The newsreel has been taken as it stands—French titles and commentary included. Over the French voice is superimposed the familiar voice of Leslie Mitchell translating the German propaganda into English. At the end of each German claim the English commentator answers it, and his answer is illustrated with shots from our newsreels. Stalingrad is falling, says the French voice. The Russians are sweeping forward from Stalingrad, says the English. India will rise against Britain. India is in the war with us says Mr. Mitchell. Rommel is about to sweep

across Egypt and join up with the German armies who are victoriously moving down from Russia: the answer to this one was almost too easy.

The shrinking, sensitive ones will hate this film. It is vulgar and not-quite-the-sort-of-thing, old man; but thank the Lord for a bit of punch at last and if people will wear their belts round their necks they mustn't mind being fouled. But if the Ministry are going at last to start hitting hard they must be more careful. The whole Indian sequence was, as usual, bungled. The German voice implied that India was prepared to rise against us and form the third part of the pincer movement. This threw our commentator into a panic and he became entirely unconvincing. Surely the thing to have done would have been either to emphasise Wavell and the British Indian Army or to say that Japan helped to solve the problem for us by splitting Indian opinion.

And why call the film "Invincible?" However often you cross out a word on the screen its effect remains in the mind. To end on "Invincible" written in large letters was surely a major blunder. Somewhere, at the back of the mind, the two words Germany and Invincible are now securely wedded.

Propaganda Value: Excellent except for the two points mentioned. Maybe everyone knew it all before, but repetition is a basic part of propaganda, and the film is lively, novel and stimulating.

The Freedom of Aberfeldy. Production: Alan Harper. Made in co-operation with Service men from the Dominions and the people of Aberfeldy. Camera: Henry Cooper. M.O.I. 10 mins. **Subject:** The villagers of Aberfeldy decide to throw their houses open to men in the Forces from overseas.

Treatment: This is a pleasant, naïve little film with a delightful feeling about it. It is pleasantly shot and beautifully commented as though by the three men whose visit to Aberfeldy is the subject of the film. They are an Australian soldier, a New Zealand pilot and a Canadian sailor, who find in Aberfeldy and in the hearts of its people an echo of their own homes.

Propaganda value: Good, because it's human.

Garden Friends and Foes. Production: G.B. Instructional. Director: D. Catling. Commentator: E. V. H. Emmett. A M.O.I. film for gardeners. 10 mins. Non-T.

Subject: The pests that can attack the vegetable crop of the average gardener and how to deal with them.

Treatment: Couldn't be better. The film packs information and belly laughs without losing any of its points. Non-gardeners will enjoy it, gardeners will learn from it. Emmett has seldom been in better form and the film is a triumph for all concerned.

Instructional Value: First rate.

London 1942. Green Park Productions for the British Council. Production: Ralph Keene. Direction: Ken Annakin.

Subject: London in the year of war 1942.

Treatment: The face of London has changed without our noticing it very much. Even the bomb-

(continued on page 182)

New Documentary Films cont.

damage has fallen into its place and no longer shocks. To a returning visitor it must look a new city. This feeling of surprise, of making the things we take for granted stand out, has been cleverly caught by this film.

Allotments in Park Lane, coupons for clothes, music in picture galleries, serving yourself at lunch, miniature lakes at street corners and pigs in a turning off Oxford Street, this is the London we have come to accept as normal.

The director has caught it all very nicely and turned it into a useful record. As a point for particular congratulation we would mention the superb shot of Americans marching through the ruined city.

This is Annakin's first picture and few directors can have made a more auspicious start.

Propaganda Value: The film will be of interest to home audiences, but overseas its use will be of great importance. Everyone abroad wants to know what London looks like during the war. The slightly nostalgic feeling should go down well in the outposts.

✓ **Mr. and Mrs. America.** March of Time, Volume 8, No. 8.

Subject: America's Home Front.

Treatment: The main part of this film is in the form of a letter from an American father to his son in the Forces and tells the son of what America is doing to win the war. It was a nice idea, but Dad, unfortunately, is no Madame de Sevigné. Humdrum is the word for Dad and the picture is pretty humdrum too. Maybe this is because it looks like one of our own early propaganda films. The anti-Roosevelt smear is cleverly done but seems rather silly. Probably Dad is a subtle Republican as well as a bit of a bore.

✓ **Summer on the Farm.** Production: Verity Films, Green Park Unit. Direction: Ralph Keene. Associate Producer: Edgar Anstey. Camera: Raymond Elton. Editor: Julian Wintle. Music: William Alwyn. M.O.I. Length: 1,105 ft.

Subject: Farm work in summer and how a big town gets its vegetables.

Treatment: Ralph Keene started his agricultural year with a brilliant winter and followed it with an excellent spring. But now, his boots clogged with mud, he has fallen into the summer manure heap. The hard work and sparseness of winter gave his early film a tautness and toughness; the promise of spring sent him merrily on his way, but summer's fulfilment seems to have clogged and nauseated his spirits. Gone is everything except competence, and she is a sad companion for a film maker. All the usual things are there and the sequences showing how the town is supplied should have been interesting but they turn out to be merely informative. However, summer will pass and with the autumn we wish Mr. Keene a return to his former brilliance.

Propaganda value: Routine informational stuff.

[Note.—We hope all farmers are taking courses in film making—they had better have a second string ready for the day when documentary moves in on them entirely and, in Soho Square, a Farm Centre appears.]

Trailers

Rubber Salvage: Films of Great Britain Ltd.

Sorting Salvage. Spectator.

Salvage of Tin Tubes: Realist.

Save your Bacon: McDougall and MacKendrick.

Chicken Feed: Spectator.

Diphtheria 1: Rotha Films.

Diphtheria 2: Rotha Films.

Women's Industrial Recruiting: Films of Great Britain Ltd.

The Way to His Heart: Strand.

Five-inch Bather: Public Relationship Films.

Blackout Sense: Rotha Films.

Planned Cropping: Realist.

If there were any flowers about we would make up a bouquet for the Ministry, lacking gardenias we can only raise our rather old hats. Reason for this celebration? Ministry of Information trailers, of course. John Baines, in charge of this section, is building a fantastic world of talking chickens, men with Plimsoll lines on their legs, dissolving toothpaste tubes, old-time movies and strange gardens where Father Time lays lilies on dead gardeners. In this world Dali and Ripley walk hand in hand in the cause of propaganda. Each trailer is about one and a quarter minutes and goes on at the end of the newsreel in every cinema. Its job is to put one brief message across with a punch.

Basil Radford is seen pinching old tyres and rubber soles—Save Your Rubber—a Japanese skull gloats over the capture of the Malayan tin mines—Save Your Toothpaste Tubes—a child is killed in an air raid—Immunise Your Children Against Diphtheria, and so on. Every sort of technique is used, cartoon, model and mystery as well as human beings. On the whole the humans are the less successful. Who wants to listen to a housewife when you can hear a talking hen? In these brief nightmares there can be no false notes, no hesitation, no slipshodder, every frame must count. The trick stuff packs more punch, gets a clearer message across and is more entertaining. This group of trailers is a good job, imaginatively and excitingly done.

✓ **When We Build Again.** Production: Strand for Cadbury Bros. Direction: Ralph Bond. Photography: Charles Marlborough. Based on the Bournville Housing Trust Survey. Theatrical and non-theatrical. 25 minutes.

Subject: Rehousing.

Treatment: The great merit of this film is its honesty. Rehousing is an appallingly complicated business, and Ralph Bond has firmly resisted the temptation to whittle it all down to some comfortably simple, facile solution.

Within the framework of three soldiers on leave boarding a train to travel to their three different homes, the film shows the three main types of life that have grown up in the cities: the slum back streets round the city centre, the dreary terraced rows further out in the suburbs and the dispersed estate houses on the city outskirts. By means of interviews with different people the film shows the advantages and disadvantages of each type—the dirt and inconvenience of the slum, the suburban terrace making the worst of both worlds, with its damp, its high rents and its lack of back-street 'matiness' and the hygienic sterilised estate houses where it's over a mile's walk to get a drink and it takes more than an hour a day and 6s. a week travelling to and from work. Then an architect steps forward and shows how he would redesign an already built-up area, and how he would plan a new town. Finally the film reviews various housing experiments that have tried to overcome some of the difficulties, and ends with the plea that the people deserve nothing but the best and should get it.

Technically, the film is nicely shot and its straightforwardness and lack of pretensions are a pleasure in these latter days of crawling to authority and would-be artiness. Not enough trouble, however, has been taken to work the material into film shape. Granted the subject is a difficult one, but if no better picture can be found to accompany long stretches of commentary than a pan over parkland or the pages of a book turning, it would be better to leave them out altogether, or somehow fight it round into film terms. Also much of the music is not at all suitable and the opening sequence is an example of something one had hoped had been buried for good and all long ago—an impressionist sequence of people in cities accompanied by a hectoring would-be poetic commentary.

But the honesty of the film—its sticking to hard facts—easily makes up for its faults and its rather unwieldy shape. For years we've had to listen to the middle-class technocrats, the Corbusiers, Gropiuses, Mendelsohns and Lloyd Wrights of this world, telling us what they were going to give us to live in, and that we should be duly thankful. In a large number of cases their plans were based on nothing much more than some personal weakness or middle-class prejudice, the classic example being H. G. Wells, because he himself suffers from colds, planning for us all to live in air-conditioned towns under the ground. Well, this film will have none of that nonsense: it goes firmly straight to the people who would have to live in those abortions and tries to find out what they think they want. There's a stout old dame who doesn't want to leave the friendly warmth of her slum street, and a magnificent Mr. Dugmore who would like to meet the architec who designed the block of flats he has to live in, where a penny dropped in one room reverberates like the noise of a shipyard through the whole block. As the film points out, and as anyone knows who has taken the trouble to find out, flats are not popular; 90 per cent of the tenants would prefer estate houses. The film is careful to show, however, that much of the unpopularity of flats is due to bad design and shoddy workmanship, and this can largely be overcome by such schemes as the fine Quarry Hill Estate at Leeds, where there are lifts and an astonishing system of central plughole rubbish collection. Incidentally the Labour Council of Leeds was sabotaged right and left over the building of these flats by the Tories, and even to-day (because of the war) they are still unfinished.

Are estate houses the solution then? In spite of the man who complains of the time and expense of getting to work and of the lack of a pub, the film seems in the end to suggest that they are, though it is careful not to say so direct. And yet in peace time there was always a far greater waiting list for the little two-storey terrace houses of Poplar and Stepney ("the slums") than for the bright clean houses of the L.C.C. Becontree estate. And the reason for this is something that the film does not touch on, something that cannot be found by the too-simple short cut of asking people individually what they think they want—the answers never really add up. What decides how people want to live and in what sort of houses is all bound up with that much-flogged word, "community," which in the old days meant the life of the street, and still does in the slums. Until people have made up their minds what new sort

(continued on page 184)

No. 10

THE CRANE AND THE CRAW-FISH



A Crane had once settled her habitation by the side of a broad and deep lake, and lived upon such fish as she could catch in it; these she got in plenty enough for many years; but at length having become old and feeble, she could fish no longer. In this afflicting circumstance she began to reflect, with sorrow, on the carelessness of her past years: "I did ill," said she to herself, "in not making in my youth necessary provision to support me in my old age; but, as it is, I must now make the best of a bad market, and use cunning to get a livelihood as I can." With this resolution she placed herself by the water-side, and began to sigh and look mighty melancholy. A Craw-fish, perceiving her at a distance, accosted her, and asked her why she appeared so sad? "Alas," said she, "how can I otherwise choose but grieve, seeing my daily nourishment is like to be taken from me? for I just now heard this talk between two fishermen passing this way: said one to the other, 'Here is great store of fish, what think you of clearing this pond?' to whom his companion answered, 'No; there is more in such a lake; let us go thither first, and then come hither the day afterwards.' This they will certainly perform; and then," added the Crane, "I must soon prepare for death."

The Craw-fish, on this, went to the fish, and told them what he had heard; upon which the poor fish, in great perplexity, swam immediately to the Crane, and addressing themselves to her, told her what they had heard, and added, "We are now in so great a consternation that we are come to desire your advice." To which the Crane replied, "That which you acquaint me with, I heard myself from the mouths of fishermen; we have no power sufficient to withstand them; nor do I know any other way to secure you but this: it will be many months before they can clear the other pond; and, in the meantime, I can at times, and as my strength will permit me, remove you one after another into a little pond here hard by, where there is very good water, and where the fishermen can never catch you, by reason of the extraordinary depth." The fish approved this counsel, and desired the Crane to carry them one by one into this pond. Nor did she fail to fish up three or four every morning, but she carried them no farther than to the top of a small hill, where she ate them: and thus she feasted herself for a while.

But one day, the Craw-fish, having a desire to see this delicate pond, made known his curiosity to the Crane, who, bethinking herself that the Craw-fish was her most mortal enemy, resolved to get rid of him at once, and murder him as she had done the rest; with this design she flung the Craw-fish upon her neck, and flew towards the hill. But when they came near the place, the Craw-fish, spying at a distance the small bones of his slaughtered companions, mistrusted the Crane's intention, and laying hold of a fair opportunity, got her neck in his claw, and grasped it so hard, that he fairly saved himself, and strangled the Crane.

REALIST FILM UNIT

47 OXFORD STREET, W.1

Telephone: GERRARD 1958

The Workers' Film Association

THE Workers' Film Association claims that it is the outcome of the foresight and planning of the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party five years ago. It is the realisation of their belief that their ideals could best be communicated to the public by means of film. In the first year a small library was installed, nine films made, and a number of sound projectors sold. In the next year, however, progress was retarded by the war, conditions making it difficult to arrange film shows. It was decided to carry on with a nucleus staff.

Next year however, when Soviet Russia came into the war, a large number of Soviet sub-standard sound films, edited for distribution in Britain, were handled by the Workers Film Association. Necessary reorganisation was completed and the Association registered as a Co-operative Society. After a full year's work, in spite of the fact that some of the services provided were offered at half the trade price, the annual balance sheet showed a surplus of £1,000.

In addition to Soviet films, Czechoslovak, Chinese, Polish and Norwegian films were distributed. *Our Film*, a contribution to the war effort and an appreciation of the heroic struggle of the Soviet people, made by the film workers at Denham Studios, was also exclusively distributed by the Association. The library was increased by films produced by the Film Department of the London Co-operative Society, the five London Co-operative Societies, the Woodcraft Folk, the Co-operative Wholesale Society Ltd. and Paole Zion.

During the year film schools, conferences and special film exhibitions were arranged for film students. Mobile units gave nearly 550 shows at workers' organisations which included a series of conferences arranged by the Trades Union Congress, and a series of one week's showings by Co-operative Societies. Altogether 13,672 reels were distributed during the year.

A series of full length feature films was added to the Library and now it lists over 600 films. Agents were appointed all over the country and a branch library established in Scotland under the auspices of the Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society Ltd.

Negotiations instituted to incorporate the Co-operative Union Ltd. in the Association, had to be withdrawn owing to wartime conditions, but the National Association of Co-operative Education Committees Ltd. and the Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society Ltd. applied for and received full membership.

An advisory committee was appointed to assist the management committee in making known the Workers' Film Association's services. The Workers' Travel Association Ltd. and the Holiday Fellowship Ltd. joined the advisory committee, and as a result the Association was invited to provide weekly programmes of films at their hostels on behalf of the Ministry of Supply.

Sound projectors were provided for the General and Municipal Workers Union and the Slough Co-operative Society while other societies have placed deposits with the Association for projectors as soon as they become available.

A series of short films have been ordered by several Co-operative Societies.

J. Reeves

British Film Role in America, cont.

Another important rôle we should be playing is in the detailing of our own war experiences to the people of America who are now beginning to go through very similar experiences. Rationing, in many aspects, now looms large there. As far as we know, no films have been sent across detailing to U.S. families the way in which British families have adjusted their lives; to all sorts of restrictions on food, fuel, etc. Yet such films would surely find a market in the States and would be welcomed as contributions to local morale as well as being good British propaganda.

Furthermore, we should always remember that material (uncut) is saleable as well as completed films (many of which, as we have seen, are not). The present U.S. film representative, George Archibald, is believed to realise this point, which incidentally involves quite drastic considerations. For instance, if a prestige documentary six reels in length won't sell *quickly*, it should be regarded as a collection of material, and placed all across the U.S. market via the newsreels, the various shorts series, and so on. British material is better on the screen than in the can.

There are, to be fair to the M.O.I., some achievements in regard to the U.S. problem. Highly specialised films, which concentrate on information and carry their propaganda message by implication, have for some time been encouraged. Some of these, rightly, are for highly specialised audiences, others for wider use.

In general, however, the situation is still very unsatisfactory and is to be solved only by whole-time concentration by active and positive-minded people who are not afraid of making drastic decisions and insisting on their being carried out.

Correspondence

DEAR SIR,

In the review of the New Documentary Films in the January number of the *Documentary News Letter*, it is stated that "Kill or be Killed" is "unfortunately only for non-theatrical circulation in this country".

This is not correct, as it is being shown by members of this Association from March 1st, onwards.

Bookings received so far are as follows:

Week commencing:

1st March, 1943 News Theatre, Leeds.

5th April, 1943 Topical News Theatre, Aberdeen.

3rd May, 1943 Tatler Theatre, Manchester.

31st May, 1943 Tatler Theatre, Chester.

5th July, 1943 News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

Other non-theatrical films being shown by members are as follows:

Paratroops, Street Fighting, Life Begins Again, Control Room.

D. M. VAUGHAN,
General Secretary

New Documentary Films, cont.

of community they intend to make of themselves, what they're going to do about the family for instance, or about economic equality, most architectural planning is a waste of time. *Propaganda Value:* Good. It states problems clearly and without patronage, and even if it offers no lead or solution, it will help people to think about the issues involved.



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